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ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TOWARDS AGRICULTURE AS A PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to find out the attitude of young agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession. Locale of study was College of Agriculture, G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttarakhand. Data was collected from 50 students using pre-tested questionnaire. It was found that maximum number of respondents had high academic performance and had medium level of total family income and majority of students' father was in service followed by business and cultivation. Study also indicates that majority of students were male and maximum number of students had their residences located in some rural area. The study revealed that majority (64 per cent) of the students out of the sample covered had neutral attitude towards agriculture as a profession. While, 24 per cent of the respondents had negative and only 12 per cent students had positive attitude towards agriculture as a profession. The poor image of persons involved in agriculture needs to be changed and the young people are the ideal catalysts for such change given their greater propensity and willingness to adopt new ideas, concepts and technology which are all critical to changing the way agriculture is practiced and perceived.

KEYWORDS: Agriculture, Attitude, Profession, Students, Uttarakhand

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Original Article

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development is an important foundation for the economic development of any country and the agricultural sector is undoubtedly the prime area of concentration for economic progress. Agriculture is no more a domain of an uneducated farmer. Agriculture and allied sectors is undoubtedly the largest livelihood provider in India, especially in the rural areas.In the early 1950s, half of India's GDP came from the agricultural sector. By 1995, that contribution came down to about 25 per cent and by 2011, the sector contributed a mere 13.9 per cent to the national GDP. It is obvious that the agricultural sector of India has been losing a substantial section of its labour force, the youth, particularly males due to lack of incentive for taking up agriculture as a career and staying in the rural areas, thus leading to migration from rural to urban areas in search of white collar jobs. More specifically the youth have developed a negative attitude towards agriculture as a career, thus are no longer interested in taking up careers in agriculture.

Across the world, 1.2 billion people belong to the age group of 15-24 years. Out of these, 754 million (85 per cent) live in developing countries and approximately 60 per cent live in Asia alone. Their number has tripled since 1950s. By the year 2025, the number of youth living in developing countries is likely to reach 89.5 per cent. (Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2012).

The National Commission on Farmers (2004) stressed the need for attracting and retaining educated youth in farming. In a similar vein, the National Policy for Farmers (2007) underscored the need "to introduce

measures which can help to attract and retain youth in farming and processing of farm products for higher value addition, by making farming intellectually stimulating and economically rewarding".

India has the largest youth population in the world. About 70 per cent of India's population is below the age of 35 years. According to some estimates, the proportion of population under 25 years in India is 51 per cent and the proportion under 35 is about 66 per cent. However, out of the youth population of 460 million, only 333 million youth in India are literate and unemployment rate is highest (10.6 per cent) among youth (Government of India, National Youth Policy, 2012). According to the National Policy on Agriculture (2012) the major thrust of this period should be towards strengthening rural infrastructure to support faster agricultural development, promote value addition, accelerate the growth of agro business, create employment in rural areas, secure a fair standard of living for the farmers and agricultural workers and their families, discourage migration to urban areas and face the challenges arising from the economic liberalization and globalization (Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2012).

In a study conducted by the National Sample Survey (2010), it was found that over 45 per cent of farmers wanted to quit farming. Hence, the present day challenge is to persuade educated youth including farm graduates to stay in villages and take up agriculture as a profession and to help them earn a decent living in villages. According to M. S. Swaminathan, this will require a three-pronged strategy:

- Improve the productivity and profitability of small holdings through appropriate land use policies, technologies and market linkages and developing a "4C approach" i.e. conservation, cultivation, consumption and commerce,
- Enlarge the scope for the growth of agro-processing, agro-industries and agri-business and establish a "Farm to Home" chain in production, processing and marketing, and
- Promote opportunities for the service sector to expand in a manner that will trigger the technological and economic upgradation of farm operations.

Despite concerns of ageing agricultural producers, agriculture is one of the most important sources of economic activity for Indian youth and will likely continue to be so over the next few decades. Farming is becoming knowledge intensive and there is need for retaining farm graduates in our villages to achieve desired technological upgrading of farm enterprises. At present, most farm graduates are either taking jobs in government sector, financial institutions or in the private sector, not many taking to farming as profession.

Majority of youth in the Uttarakhand state has agricultural background, a necessary condition for developing positive attitudes towards agriculture as a career, but only few who have no option engage in agricultural production as a means of livelihood, because they have developed a negative attitude towards agriculture and they are no longer interested in engaging in agriculture as a career due to the following reasons:

- Inadequate of awareness of the scope of opportunities in the agriculture sector;
- Inadequate access to land;
- Insufficient access to capital;
- The risk associated with farming;
- Temptation towards more lucrative white collar jobs;

- Drudgery associated with agricultural production.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the socio-economic, personal and psychological characteristics of students.
- To study the attitude of students towards agriculture as a profession.

RESEARCH MENTHODOLOGY

The study was focused on assessing the attitude of students towards agriculture so all the Agricultural Universities formed the population frame for the study. However, the G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, Uttarakhand was purposively selected which constituted the locale of the present study i.e. College of Agriculture. The locale in which this study was conducted is the premier agricultural institute of the country which is first Agriculture University established in India and takes pride in initiating Practical Crop Production course in order to give direct experience in sowing, cultivation, and cost benefit analysis of crops. Students not only earn while they learn but are also exposed to various facets of rural life and work situation through attachment to village and agro industrial organization as well as participation in plant clinic laboratories and field work. Analytical research design was used in the study. The target population included undergraduate students of collage of agriculture enrolled in B.Sc. Agriculture degree programme. Fifty students were selected through Simple Random Sampling Technique. Chit method was used to draw sample. The pre-tested questionnaire was administered to collect data.Attitude of youth towards agriculture was divided into three categories; viz. negative, neutral and positive. Data regarding attitude of students towards agriculture as a profession has been presented in the Table 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Sample Characteristics

The results of the study indicated average age of students was 21.42 years and the range of students' age was in between 19 to 24 years and majority 60 per cent students belonged to medium age group, while 11 per cent belonged to low age group i.e. 19 to 20 years and only 18 per cent belonged to high age group.Majority (56 per cent) were male students of B.Sc. Agriculture out of the sample covered whereas the female population of the students was 44 per cent. Majority i.e. 64 per cent of the respondents belonged to general caste. The Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe and Other Backward Caste respondents comprised 22 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. Majority of the students i.e. 76 per cent had received their basic medium of education in English medium while 24 per cent of students were from Hindi medium of instruction.Maximum of the respondents (48 per cent) covered in B.Sc. Agriculture students had high CGPA (Current Grade Point Average), while 38 per cent of students were average CGPA holders and only 14 per cent of the students were low in CGPA.The results of the study indicated that majority of the respondents (80 per cent) were from Nuclear family and only 10 per cent respondents were from joint families. Majority of the respondents (74 per cent) belonged to medium size families followed by large families (18 per cent) and small families (8 per cent) respectively.Majority of the students (62 per cent) had their residences located in some rural area and 38 per cent of the students lived in the urban area.Results revealed that average family income of the respondents was Rs.354380 Lakhs per annum. Majority of the respondents' family i.e. 72 per cent had total family income of Rs.171872-536888.92 per year. Low income group and high income group respondents comprised 16 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. Majority (60 per cent) of students' father of B.Sc. Agriculture was in service followed by 16 percent in business and 14 per cent

were engaged in cultivation and remaining 10 per cent were involved in independent profession.Majority i.e. 66 per cent of the students out of the sample covered in B.Sc. Agriculture had moderate level of self-confidence whereas, 18 per cent had low self-confidence and 16 per cent students had high self-confidence (Table 1).

Attitude of Students towards Agriculture as a Profession

Attitude of students towards agriculture as a profession was measured and results revealed that majority i.e. 64 per cent of the students out of the sample covered in B.Sc. Agriculture had neutral attitude towards agriculture as a profession. While, 24 per cent of the respondents had negative and only 12 per cent students had positive attitude towards agriculture as a profession.These findings confirm earlier studies (Hosenally, 2012; Movahedi, 2013) where it was found that majority of the youth had a positive attitude towards agriculture. The present study, however, contradicts the findings from some studies (Faralu, 2003; Ghadiri, 2005; Juma, 2007; and Norsida, 2007) which indicate that there is a negative attitude among youth towards agriculture. Some recent work has indicated that student' decisions to pursue agriculture as a field of study or career, and their involvement and success there in, may be predictable by investigating students' attitude towards agricultural education and training (Basseyet *al.* 2012; Ilenlohet *al.* 2012). Student willingness to pursue agriculture as a career depends on student attitudes towards agricultural education and science (Ilenlohet *al.* 2012; Radhakrishnaet *al.* 2003). A positive attitude towards agriculture is a prerequisite for their engagement in the agriculture sector. The neutral attitude towards agriculture as a means of livelihood clearly indicates that youth were quite aware about career opportunities in agriculture but they might perceive some constraints to opt agriculture as their profession to earn livelihood. Hence, there is an urgent need to make special efforts to reach and convince the youth of the country regarding the need and advantage of taking up agriculture as their means of livelihood.

CONCLUSIONS

Agriculture is the mainstay of humankind. Successive governments in India have designed many agricultural development programmes to exploit this sector extensively for the upkeep of the teaming population, provision of revenue earnings for development purposes and employment to stem down crimes, corruption, and other forms of indiscipline among youth in the country. However, most of these agricultural development programmes paid little attention to the sociological aspect of agriculture, particularly attitude of youth towards agriculture as a career. It is important to design a sustainable, youth friendly agricultural development programmes that will change youth's negative attitude towards agriculture as a career and match youth employment needs and career aspirations in the agricultural sector.

The result of this study would help agricultural universities for designing and developing courses for rural youth that may attract them to the sector. The proposed study would also help to the extension agencies and policy makers to plan and design youth education programmes and developmental activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings, the following recommendations have been made in shaping the young students' attitude towards agriculture as a career to help them find and hold down job in the various agricultural fields that abound in the state.

- There is need to consolidate positive youth attitude towards agriculture and high level of awareness of the agricultural career opportunities among youth in the state youth through strong and purposive media campaign

targeted at youth and aimed at uplifting the face of agriculture from playing the second fiddle to other professions to being the main player of the economy.

- Admission selection criteria should give upper hand to youth from farming families for gaining admission to the higher education institutions, since the result of this research showed significant effects of some socio-economic characteristics such as (father's major occupation, family income, etc.) on youth attitude towards agriculture as a career.

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APPENDICES

Table 1: Characteristics of the Respondents (N=50)

S. N.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	**Age**		
	Very young(19 to 20 years)	11	22
	Young (21-22 years)	30	60
	Mature (22 to 24 years)	9	18
2.	**Gender**		
	Male	28	56
	Female	22	44
3.	**Caste**		
	General	32	64
	Other Backward Caste	7	14
	Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe	11	22
4.	Medium of basic education		
	Hindi	12	24
	English	38	76
5.	**Academic performance**		
	Low (up to 6.98)	7	14
	Average (6.99-7.44)	19	38
	High (>7.44)	24	48
6.	**Family type**		
	Nuclear	40	80
	Joint	10	20
7.	**Family size**		
	Small (upto 3 members)	4	8
	Medium(4-9 members)	37	74
	Large (>9 members)	9	18
8.	Family background		
	Rural	31	62
	Urban	19	38
9.	**Total family income**		
	Low (up to 171871)	8	16
	Medium(171872-536889)	36	72
	High (>536889)	6	12
10.	**Occupation of head of the family**		
	Labour	Nil	0
	Caste occupation	Nil	0
	Business	8	16
	Independent profession	5	10
	Cultivation	7	14
	Service	30	60
11.	**Self-confidence**		
	Low (up to 24)	9	18
	Moderate (25-33)	33	66
	High (>33)	8	16

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to Attitude Towards Agriculture as a Profession.(N=50)

S. No.	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Negative(7 to -1)	12	24
2.	Neutral (0 to 6)	32	64
3.	Positive (7 to 11)	6	12